

MHR *Connections*

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 12 Number 4

April 2012

"The day was fantastic!"

The first human rights youth conferences targeting Junior High students were a huge success with the students engaged, inspired and enthusiastic. According to Pam Roberts, Investigator with the Commission and Co-Chair of the Youth Conference Team, the decision has been made to continue to offer the program to this younger age group for the foreseeable future.



Some students travelled a long way to attend the Winnipeg Conference. Here students from Oscar Lathlin Collegiate in The Pas work on their banner.

For ten years prior to this conference, high school students and their teachers were invited to attend.

"Our goal," says Ms Roberts, "is to reach out to younger students and have a greater impact as they continue into their high school years."

The first 2012 conference was held in Shilo, Manitoba on April 17th. The Commission staff loved the Multi Purpose Training Facility as it was large enough to hang the Peace by Piece Banner. It served as an impressive backdrop to the conference and students and teachers enjoyed having their pictures taken in front of it. The immense banner with the collective human rights statements of students from around Manitoba was created in 2010 in celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

The "Be the Change Challenge" was the focal point at both the Shilo Y Rights Conference and the one held in Winnipeg two days later. This challenge gave the students the opportunity to showcase the great social justice projects and activities they have already initiated at their schools.

"These projects demonstrate that youth are the leaders of today," says Intake Worker and Co-Chair of the Youth Conference Committee Lorraine Lambert. Every project that was presented received an Achievement Award from the Commission and special recognition went to Onanole Elementary School and Green Valley School for their contributions to the challenge.

The Y Rights Conferences offered three unique, interactive sessions, including "What About Now", a new and

Visit the Commission's Facebook page for pictures and videos from the Y Rights Conferences.

continued on page 2

THE MANITOBA
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION



LA COMMISSION DES
DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
DU MANITOBA



www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

The *Are we there yet?* national human rights conference in Winnipeg this June will proudly present some of Canada's and Manitoba's best and most respected speakers in roles of keynote, plenary and concurrent sessions speakers. It will highlight some of the most important human rights issues facing us today.

The concurrent session topics will range from harassment, disability, accommodation, mental health issues, social and economic rights, housing for vulnerable populations, and the latest in education tools. We have searched across the country and the province and found the expertise and experience to inform, intrigue and question common practices.

For example, Dianna Evangeline (formerly Dianna Janzen) will look back at her experience in the 1980's when she filed a human rights case of discrimination based on sex. Her case landed in the Supreme Court of Canada and the decision would result in the way Canada defines sexual harassment. Her journey through this time and her perception of what is happening today is extraordinary. She will be joined by two other panellists who will speak to harassment and homophobia and using a restorative justice method when dealing with those who harass.

In another session, three powerful speakers and prominent advocates for persons with disabilities, Shelagh Day, Gwen Brodsky and Yvonne Peters will discuss the extent to which the duty to accommodate has been successful in eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities and speak to their just released research project, "Disabling Poverty/ Enabling Citizenship".

In the session *Persistent Disadvantage: Addressing Social and Economic Rights* panellists will share their perspectives on how historically disadvantaged groups are able to overcome barriers to equality.

And as mental health issues are one of the fastest growing areas of human rights and responsibilities, the conference will be offering a number of views on the topic from accommodation, to protecting and promoting mental health in the correctional system.

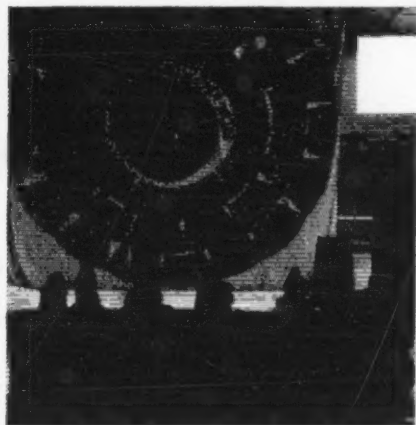
There is even more; considerations when fighting for systemic change, the value of human rights education and a full plenary session on new strategies and approaches for engaging the public in human rights issues.

I encourage you to join us for all or part of this human rights conference and then ask yourself, "Are we there yet?" <http://www.cashra2012.ca>

continued from page 1

immensely successful workshop that focused on harassment and bullying. Activities like pinning clothes pegs on each other and building marshmallow towers with toothpicks helped the students understand why and how bullying and harassment happens and how to deal with it.

Helping students get involved was also a goal of the Y Rights Conference. One way to accomplish this was by a game



The Multi Purpose Training Facility in Shilo proved to be the perfect location for showcasing the immense Peace by Piece Banner.

of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Jesse Rock, an Investigator with the Commission and Pam Roberts took this game to a whole new level. (See the video on the Commission's Facebook Page.) The game was followed by the traditional banner making activity. "By creating a banner to take home to their school, students have an opportunity to share what they've learned with their

entire school, says Ms Roberts, adding "The student banners are very inspiring. With minimal materials they are able to create a meaningful human rights message that really hits home."

Guest speakers at the conference included Mayor Shari Decter Hirst of Brandon, Base Commander Lieutenant-Colonel Richard W.H. Goodyear and Chief Warrant Officer Steven Milton in Shilo and the 2011 Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award recipient Rebekah Enns in Winnipeg. Jerry Woods, the Chairperson of the Manitoba Human Rights Board of Commissioners and Robin Dwarka, a Commissioner on the Board hosted the conferences.

**"A big thank you to the teachers who recognize the importance of bringing students to our human rights youth conferences."
MHRC Staff**

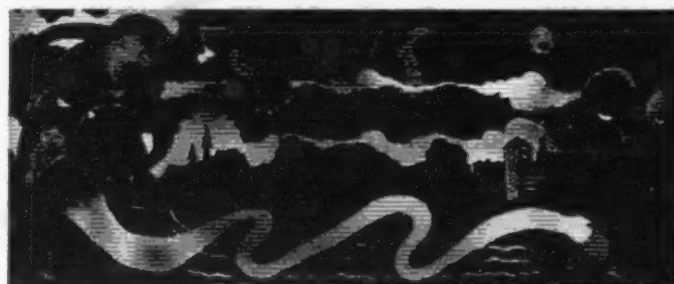
Y Rights Conference: Teacher Comments

"The kids had a great time...and our banner is hanging proudly at the front entrance of the school for everyone to see and of course a lot of the younger students are asking about it." Colleen Small, Holland Elementary School

"WOW!! Thank you so much for such an amazing day in Shilo. The workshops were of relevance to what we need to be reminded of on a daily basis and the importance of treating ALL fairly and equitably." Tammy Ballingall, Baldur School

"The day was fantastic! I really appreciated your enthusiasm and great way with kids. Loved it!" Shauna Price, Forrest Elementary School

Where will you be June 17 – June 19, 2012?



Griffith Gallery, artists Chad Reeves and Fred Thomas

Are we there yet?

**A National Human Rights Conference
June 17 – 19, 2012 • Winnipeg, Manitoba**

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is proud to host the 2012 CASHRA (Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies) conference. This two day national conference brings together lawyers, human resource professionals, non-profit organizations and others working to achieve equality to learn, share and dialogue about our country's most pressing human rights issues. Among the guest speakers are Host of CBC's 8th Fire Wab Kinew, Attorney General Andrew Swan, Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities Kevin Chief, Cindy Blackstock, the Executive Director of First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Cal Stone, Recognized Elder of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

"What we do here, matters there. What happens there, matters here." Samantha Nutt

Dr. Samantha Nutt, the Executive Director of War Child Canada and War Child U.S.A., will be the keynote speaker at the National Human Rights Conference **"Are we there yet?"** Register now to hear this amazing award-winning humanitarian and acclaimed public speaker.

www.cashra2012.ca • Registration now open

Y Rights Conference: Feedback from Students

"I'm happy to know that one person can help a lot."

"Everyone needs to know what we learned about today to make a difference."

"Wow – what a great day!"

"It's up to each of us to defend others. Rights come with responsibilities."

The best thing about the conference was "What About Now" – it made fun games relate to real life!

"Awareness is the key. Start holding things like this at schools so everyone can hear it!"

"A small difference makes a big change. Thank you."

"We need to promote what discrimination and harassment is to open the eyes of more kids."